

AmeriCorps

Member Handbook

Example

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome

A brief statement welcoming your members to the Program.

Staff Names, Site Supervisors Names and Phone Numbers

A list of all staff members, site supervisors and their phone numbers so the members know how to reach these key people for general information or in case of an emergency.

Description of AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages thousands of Americans of all ages and backgrounds in a domestic Peace Corps - getting things done - across America by meeting our education, public safety, environmental, and human needs. In exchange for a year or two of service, AmeriCorps members earn an educational award to help pay back student loans or to finance college, graduate school or vocational training.

Program's Mission

A specific statement of your program's mission. You also might want to include its goals and objectives, history of your organization, or anything else you think the members should know about your organization and your program.

Purpose of this Handbook

THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT A CONTRACT. This Handbook represents PROGRAM's current policies and procedures; it is not a contract between you and PROGRAM. Except for the policy that an AmeriCorps member may only be released "for cause", PROGRAM has the right to make changes, additions and deletions in these policies and procedures at any time without prior notice.

Member Policies

Nondiscrimination Policy

It is the policy of PROGRAM to assure all persons of equal rights and opportunities with respect to serving in this organization. PROGRAM will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age (over 40 years), sex, marital status, medical condition (cured or rehabilitated cancer) or physical handicap (including AIDS), nor any other category or classification that is either prohibited by law or unrelated to the services to be performed or the services to be provided.

Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment is an unlawful practice prohibited by both federal and state law. All AmeriCorps members must be allowed to serve in an environment free from unsolicited and unwelcome sexual behavior or overtures. This has become part of the interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which prohibits discrimination in employment based on gender.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines define sexual harassment as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
2. Submission to or reflection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

It is the policy of PROGRAM that sexual harassment is unacceptable behavior and it will not be condoned or tolerated. Individuals and sites that violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of their term of service and/or termination of right to participate in the PROGRAM partnership.

Site Supervisors and AmeriCorps staff are directly responsible for preventing sexual harassment from occurring by taking appropriate action.

The Grievance Procedure, as outlined below, should be used to resolve grievances regarding sexual harassment.

Reasonable Accommodations

Members have a right to reasonable accommodations for any disability. If you have a mental or physical disability, or medical condition, and need some accommodation made at your service site in order to perform the responsibilities assigned to you, please contact your Site Supervisor, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, or NAME, who is PROGRAM'S Disability Specialist.

Jury Duty

Serving on a jury is an important responsibility of citizenship. To strengthen the spirit of citizenship, members are encouraged to serve jury duty. Members serving on a jury will not be penalized for doing so. During the time a member serves as a juror, he/she will continue to accrue his/her

normal service hours and receive their living allowance and health benefits. The members may also keep reimbursements for incidental expenses received from the court.

Voting Policy

Participation in the electoral process through voting is another key element of citizenship. Therefore, ACM's who are unable to vote before or after service hours will be allowed to do so during their service time without incurring any penalties. The site supervisor should determine the length of absence.

Voter Registration

Corporation funds may not be used to conduct voter registration drives. The Corporation does not recognize voter registration drives as an acceptable service activity for AmeriCorps members. Even non-partisan voter registration efforts are prohibited.

However, members are encouraged to register to vote and are allowed to register during their service hours. PROGRAM will provide members who would like to register to vote transportation to and from the voter registration office. (optional) Members may count the time spent on registering to vote as part of the 20 percent of non-direct service hours.

Drug Free Policy

It is the policy of PROGRAM that their workplaces as well as all its service sites are Drug Free. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in PROGRAM's workplace as well as its sites. Action will be taken against any staff or members who violate this policy in accordance with the disciplinary procedures outlined below.

It is a condition of all members' participation in this program to abide by the terms of the above statement. In addition, a member must immediately notify the Program in writing of his or her conviction of a violation of this policy.

Tobacco Free Policy

It is the policy of PROGRAM that smoking is not permitted in any portion of its office or any of its sites that are used for the provision of health care services, day care, and education to children under the age of 18. **(Example)**

Education Awards

The GI Bill from the 1940's offers an important model for the national service program of today. The idea behind the GI Bill was a simple principle of reciprocity: when you give exceptional service to your country, you deserve

something back in return. The GI Bill offered scholarships to the veterans of World War II. With the knowledge they gained as a result, those veterans spurred the economic boom in America's history. Helping AmeriCorps members pay for school is fair for members - and good for America. That's why AmeriCorps offers education awards.

To qualify for an education award, you must successfully complete the required term of service for the AmeriCorps program in which you are participating. The term of service varies for different AmeriCorps programs. Under special circumstances, you may receive a prorated award if you are unable to complete your full term.

Your education award can be used in the following ways:

- ◆ to repay qualified existing or future student loans;
- ◆ to pay all or part of the cost of attending an institution of higher education (including certain vocational programs); and
- ◆ to pay expenses incurred while participating in an approved school-to-work program.

The amount of your award depends on whether your term of service is full-time or part-time. The full-time award is \$4,725 and the part-time award is \$2,362.50 or \$1,182, depending on how many hours you serve in your program. Even if you complete more than two terms of service, you may receive education awards for only the first and second terms of service - **regardless of whether they are for full-time or part-time service.**

You can divide up your award and use it any way you want, as long as it is for authorized expenditures. For example, you could apply a portion of it to existing qualified student loans and save the remainder to pay for authorized college costs a few years down the road. The education award must be used within seven years of the completion of your service. You may apply for an extension if during the seven-year period, you perform another term of service in an AmeriCorps position or if you were unavoidably prevented from using the award.

The awards are provided from a special account in the United States Treasury called the National Service Trust, which is managed by the Corporation for National Service. Education awards are subject to income taxes in the year they are used.

How the Education Award Works

When you successfully complete your term of service, the director of your project will notify the Trust by completing an End of Term Form. The Trust will mail the award packet to those members who are eligible for an

education award. The Corporation will send you a letter informing you of the amount of your award. This mailing will consist of a Voucher and Payment Request Form and accompanying instructions. You may then present the voucher to your loan holder or the school you plan to attend. The loan holder or school will contact the Corporation for payment. Payments will be made directly to them, not to you. When payments are made, the Corporation will inform you of the amounts and the balance in your account.

You should receive your letter from the Corporation within twenty days of completing your service. Because the letter will automatically be sent to the permanent address that you furnished when you enrolled, it is important that you keep the National Trust Fund informed of any changes to that address. Prior to ending your service, you will have an opportunity to update your address.

Help With Qualified Loan Payments While You Are Serving in AmeriCorps

As an AmeriCorps member, you are eligible to receive forbearance on most qualified student loans, which means you don't have to make any payments while in service. Your lender will be able to tell you which of your loans qualify for forbearance.

In order to obtain forbearance, at the time you begin your service you must apply directly to the loan holder explaining your participation in an AmeriCorps program and asking for "forbearance in the repayment" of your loan. If your loan qualifies, the loan holder will give you a form that you must fill out and send to the Trust for verification of your service. The Trust will complete its portion of this form and return it to the loan holder or to you, if requested. The Corporation certifies your status in service, but the lending institution or loan services determines your eligibility for forbearance.

After you have successfully completed your term of service, the Trust will pay the interest that accrued on your qualified student loans while you were serving. To get the interest paid, mail to the Trust a bill or statement from your lender that shows the total amount of interest that accrued (or the daily amount accrued), as well the dates of the forbearance period (the dates you served). Since these are benefits above and beyond your education award, interest payments will not be deducted from the amount of your award. However, they are subject to income tax.

Unless you are released from service for compelling personal circumstances, the Trust cannot pay any interest accrued during the period if you do not complete your full term of service. But if you do leave AmeriCorps before

completing your service, check with your lender to determine whether your student loan qualifies for another type of deferment.

****NOTE:** The education award is taxable when used. Therefore, you may want to consult with your Program Director or an accountant as how and when it is best to use your award. ie: You may not want to use the entire \$4,725 in one year because that will be added to your base income and you will be taxed on that entire amount the tax year you use the award.

II. INTRODUCTION

In order to be successful in our mission PROGRAM must provide a structure, which is intended to provide guidelines of what PROGRAM expects from its members and what members can expect from PROGRAM. These policies and procedures will serve as a reference for all management decisions in the daily administration of PROGRAM. These policies are expected to be uniformly administered. The success of the ideas contained in the handbook depends almost entirely on member leadership.

Minimum Qualifications for AmeriCorps members:

A. To be eligible to enroll in AmeriCorps, an individual must:

1. be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national or a lawful permanent resident alien of the United States *(individuals who are in the United States under a student, work, or tourist visa are **not** eligible to become AmeriCorps members.)
2. be at least 17 years old; and
3. have a high school diploma or GED or agree to obtain one while serving

Upon selection, all members must provide documentation to establish their eligibility for participation at PROGRAM, as required by law.

*Documentation which will be accepted as proof of citizen status include the following: birth certificate with appropriate photo ID, U.S. Passport, Green Card, INS Form 151, Certificate of U.S. Citizenship (INS Form N-560 or N-561), Certificate of Naturalization (INS Form N-550 or N-570), Alien Registration Receipt Card with photograph (INS Form N-551), or military documentation.

B. High School Diploma/GED

You must have a high school diploma or GED or agree to obtain one while serving. If you don't have a high school diploma or GED, please contact PROGRAM DIRECTOR. We will help you in any way we can so you can obtain one or the other during your term of service. Prior to

using your educational award you must have proof of receiving a high school diploma or receiving a GED.

C. Criminal History/Background Check:

It is the Corporation's policy that all AmeriCorps Programs with members or employees who have substantial direct contact with children (as defined by state law) or who perform service in the homes of children or individuals considered vulnerable by the program, shall, to the extent permitted by state and local law, conduct criminal record checks on these members or employees as part of the screening process. Members who have committed any of the following offenses will not be eligible to become an AmeriCorps member with PROGRAM: (list offenses here). **[If your members are serving in schools, please check with the school to find out what offenses would disqualify them from service. OR Indicate that if a members background check does not come back clean they will not be eligible for the program and that if there is a problem with the results, it is the responsibility of the member to clear up the matter with the Department of Justice.]**

Minimum Service Requirements for AmeriCorps members:

If you are a full time member, you must serve a minimum of 1700 hours in order to be eligible for an educational award of \$4,725. If you are part time member you must serve a minimum of 900 hours to be eligible for an award of \$2,362.50 OR 450 hours to be eligible for an award of \$1,182. Your term of service will begin DATE 1 and end DATE 2. **You are expected to serve until DATE 2, regardless of when you have completed the minimum number of hours.**

According to the "80/20 rule", 80 percent of your hours must be spent in direct service, with no more than 20 percent on indirect service (planning, training sessions, paperwork, etc.).

Second Term of Service

To be eligible for a second term, members must receive a satisfactory performance review for their first term of service and complete all program requirements. Satisfactory evaluation focuses on factors such as whether the member has:

1. Completed the required number of hours;
2. Satisfactorily completed assignments, tasks, or projects;
3. Met any other criteria that was communicated to the member during their term of service.

NOTE: Mere eligibility for a second term of service does not guarantee selection or placement.

Responsibilities and Requirements of All AmeriCorps Members

At a minimum, all AmeriCorps members while serving:

- ◆ should demonstrate professional, courteous conduct and a “can do” attitude at all times
- ◆ should attend service activities consistently and be fully engaged
- ◆ should arrive at activities on time and ready to serve
- ◆ should wear a uniform that is clean, neat and complete
- ◆ should participate fully in all organization wide events
- ◆ will not fraternize with staff or senior corps members or service recipients
- ◆ will not engage in theft, destruction of property, or violence
- ◆ will not possess or deal drugs
- ◆ will not consume alcohol during service hours
- ◆ will not possess or carry weapons

Failure to abide by the above responsibilities and requirements will result in disciplinary action as outlined below.

Required Program Activities (Examples)

(Put events here that will be required of all AmeriCorps members)

1. Program Orientation
2. Weekly Trainings - held every Friday from 8:00 – 12:00
3. Regional Trainings (if applicable) – two to three annual off-site trainings
4. Opening Day – After completion of training, member’s first opportunity for civic engagement.
5. MLK Day – A “day on” versus a “day off” to commemorate the ideals of service put forth by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
6. National Day of Service – opportunity to serve in your community
7. Graduation – to celebrate you and the program’s accomplishments

Graduation Requirements

The Education Award will be released upon satisfactory completion of all graduation requirements.

The following requirements must be met in order to graduate: **(these are only examples)**

- A. Complete 1700 hours of service
- B. Become certified in CPR and First Aid
- C. Complete a resume and cover letter
- D. Complete a career plan
- E. Receive satisfactory performance reviews

F. Continue to serve until the end of the program DATE 2.

Policies Regarding Professionalism

Attendance I

Consistent and reliable attendance is essential to doing excellent service. Members will start the year with three personal days that can be used for sick days, doctor's appointments, child care, emergencies, funerals, and vacation, etc. (with any time missed due to suspension used as a personal day).

Members will accumulate one extra personal day for every 215 hours served for a total of 12 personal days. These hours will be tracked by the Program and reported to each member monthly (or weekly). **(If your program is not able to calculate you may want to give the members 12 personal days or some number at the beginning of the program year.)**

If members use their initial three personal days before accumulating additional days or uses more days than they have at any point of the year, they will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

The system should have an "escape clause" for members who suffer a serious illness or a death in the family. In other words, it would not make sense to dismiss an exemplary member because they get a bad case of the flu and must miss a week of service. The program should closely review each of these special cases and possibly even have a peer review committee involved in the process.

To use a personal day, members must notify their Site Supervisor in writing as far in advance as possible, giving at least 24 hours notice before the day to be taken off.

In case of emergency or sudden sickness, members must call the headquarters and leave a message for their Site Supervisor, and the Program Director. The call must be made by 9:00am on the day taken off. Those who call after this time will not be paid for that day and it will count as one of their personal days. Upon their return, they will meet with their Site Supervisor and the Program Director and discuss further consequences.

Attendance II (If you choose this model you should include in the member's contract that the member may be released for cause if they fall behind in their monthly hours)

This attendance system was developed by NASCC and used by programs across the country, it is member driven and depends completely on the cumulative number of hours each member serves. The program develops a

chart, similar to the one below, of the total hours available each month, the total hours available to date, and the minimum number of hours each member must complete by the end of each month to continue in the program.

If the member does not complete the minimum number of hours by the end of the month, then he/she cannot continue in the program. Since there are more hours available each month than needed, each member has flexibility on how and when to take time off. A member with perfect attendance will build up enough hours to take personal time off, while others will just squeak by. All members who remain in the program will be on target to receive the education award.

Here are some examples using the chart below. Johnny Member completes 150 hours in January and February giving him 300 at the end of February. He wants to attend a family reunion in March and has built up a small cushion. He misses three days in March, completing only 126 hours. This gives him a three-month total of 426 and he is still able to continue in the program. Jane Member completes just the minimum 140 hours in January and then misses three days the first week in February. She must make up her missed time before the end of February to continue in the program – within the limits of the 40 hour work week. She never gets around to making up the hours and misses another day giving her 122 hours for February and 262 total hours. She is not allowed to continue in the program. (Given her attendance record, it is unlikely she would ever make up these 20 hours and would probably fall even more behind by the end of the term of service.)

Month	Hours Available In the Month	Hours Available To Date	Minimum Hours to Continue In the Program
January	150	150	140
February	150	300	282
March	150	450	424
April	150	600	566
May	150	750	708
June	150	900	850
July	150	1050	992
August	150	1200	1134
September	150	1350	1276
October	150	1500	1418
November	150	1650	1560
December	150	1800	1700

- ◆ It is important for the Project Director to post regular updates of each member's cumulative hours. Many programs just post a list in the office and update the list at the end of each week. This allows members to chart their progress and for staff to provide support to members who are nearing a cut off.
- ◆ The system should have an "escape clause" for members who suffer a serious illness or a death in the family. In other words, it would not make sense to dismiss an exemplary member because they get a bad case of the flu and must miss a week of service. The program should closely review each of these special cases and possibly even have a peer review committee involved in the process.
- ◆ The program should still have a progressive discipline system for those rare members who have exemplary attendance and unsatisfactory service attitudes. This progressive discipline system can also cover excessive lateness, and major offenses such as fighting, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, etc.

Tardiness

Promptness is important! Be sure you know what time your site supervisor expects you to start your service each day and be there on time! If something unavoidable happens that will cause you to be late, call before the time you are expected to be there. The same applies to PROGRAM training sessions and events. Please see PROGRAM Disciplinary Procedures for actions that will be taken if a member is repeatedly tardy.

Leave For Extended Period Of Time

In the case of extreme situations – extending illness, family emergencies that require considerable time, maternity leave, etc. members will be allowed to take a leave of absence from the program. This requires written approval from both your Site Supervisor and the Program Director. If a member does need to take leave for an extended period of time the should fill out a change of status form. For extended leave period, members **will not** be paid. During this leave of absence members may continue to receive health care coverage for up to 12 weeks. However, they will not lose hours accrued toward the 1700-hour graduation requirement and will be eligible to re-enter the program at a later date for as long as the Program is in existence.

Because our AmeriCorps funding is based on three-year cycles and is not guaranteed, it is best to re-enter the program at the earliest time. If the member decides not to re-enter the program the member may be eligible to receive a pro-rated education award, as long as they have served at least 255 hours.

In the case of maternity leave, a member may not be gone longer than 12 weeks. During maternity leave, members may remain on the health care

policy but must decide whether to resume service after 12 weeks or take a pro-rated education award, if eligible.

Family and Medical Leave

Members are entitled to leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, (F.M.L.A.) if they are eligible. To be eligible for leave, a member must have provided service for at least 12 months and have completed at least 1250 service hours.

Clothing Expectations or Uniforms (Example)

While serving AmeriCorps hours, the following expectations will be adhered to by all AmeriCorps members. Any questions regarding expectations for attire should be addressed with the Team Leader or site supervisor.

- ◆ Members must wear an AmeriCorps uniform shirt/tee shirt or an AmeriCorps lapel pin or AmeriCorps button.
- ◆ Members must wear clothing and shoes that are safe and appropriate for the work in which the member is involved. No open-toed shoes during service projects and physical labor.
- ◆ Members will not wear clothing that is considered “gang attire”. This includes, but is not limited to gang-style writing on clothing, tags and other indications of gang affiliation. No gang-related baseball caps or hats. Pants should not sag so as to expose underwear and both pant legs should come to the ankles.
- ◆ Member will not wear bandannas or rags.
- ◆ Members will not dress in all one color, i.e. All red, all blue, all pink.
- ◆ Members will not wear sunglasses indoors.
- ◆ Members will not wear sexually provocative clothing.
- ◆ Shirts will not be removed while working.
- ◆ Clothing must be clean and mended if torn.
- ◆ Clothing must not portray, suggest, or represent alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs or promote negative images based upon gender, religion, sexual preference, age, creed, or political beliefs. Nor will clothing promote a violent lifestyle.
- ◆ A member who reports to his/her site wearing inappropriate clothing will be sent home to change. The member cannot start counting service hours until he/she returns to his/her site in proper attire.

Failure to follow the clothing expectations as described above will result in disciplinary action as outlined below.

AND/OR

Uniform Policy and Dress Code

All staff and members represent our program and its mission whenever they are in their AmeriCorps uniforms. Your site supervisor at the work site where you are assigned will let you know what clothes are appropriate. If your supervisor doesn't say, ask! You are expected to wear the AmeriCorps T-shirt or sweatshirts when on the service site. Find out from your Site Supervisor if or when it is appropriate to wear your AmeriCorps cap at the site. If T-shirts or sweatshirts are unsuitable for an occasion, an AmeriCorps pin may be worn.

As community leaders and as role models, particularly for children staff and members, whether in uniform or in professional attire are responsible for maintaining that positive public image by adhering to the following expectations: **(Examples)**

- A. No gum chewing while in AmeriCorps uniform or while conducting program business.
- B. No tobacco chewing or smoking while in an AmeriCorps uniform or while conducting program business.
- C. No purchasing or consuming alcohol while in an AmeriCorps uniform
- D. No facial piercing while in an AmeriCorps uniform

If you leave the program other than for compelling personal circumstances, you must return your uniform. If you graduate successfully from the program, your uniform is yours to keep.

Failure to follow the clothing expectations as described above will result in disciplinary action as outlined below.

Non-Negotiables

Violence and Weapons

Members may not possess or deal weapons. They also may not engage in physical, verbal or emotional violence, threats, abuse or harassment. Members who engage in these activities will meet with the Program Director and will be dismissed for cause. Any member who is charged during the service year with a felony will be suspended without pay until the case is resolved. Any member who is convicted during the service year of a felony will be dismissed for cause.

Drugs & Alcohol

Members may not possess, deal or use controlled substances. Any member who comes to their service site drunk or high will be dismissed for cause. Any member who is charged with the sale or distribution of a controlled substance will be suspended without pay

until the case is resolved. Any member who is convicted of a drug offence during the service year will be dismissed for cause.

Professionalism

Members are required to demonstrate professionalism at all times. The aspects of professionalism at PROGRAM are listed below. However, each site's project may require more specific guidelines and will need to be discussed during the Orientation period at the beginning of the year.

1. A member must follow all AmeriCorps and PROGRAM's expectations and Policies and Procedures.
2. A member must be working on PROGRAM-related activities or responsibilities while claiming AmeriCorps hours.
3. A member's attendance at any seminars, trainings, and workshops not specifically approved by the PROGRAM Coordinator will not be accepted as service hours.
4. If a member has completed all assignments, it is the Member's responsibility to contact his/her supervisor to find acceptable service to do.
5. Unless on a scheduled break, a member will not be engaged in non-work-related activities, i.e. "hanging out", doing homework, and making personal calls.
6. A member must use appropriate language and voice tones.
7. A member must present himself/herself as a positive role model for each other and the sites and communities he/she serves.

Failure to follow the professionalism expectations described above will result in the disciplinary action outlined below.

Being a Good "Guest" at Your Site

It is important for PROGRAM members to keep in mind that your operating site has made a major financial and staff commitment by accepting you as an PROGRAM member at its site. Your operating site receives no funds from the PREOGRAM to conduct the Project; they do it so that they can provide an additional service to the community and an exceptional personal opportunity for you. It is important that you behave like a good "guest" by treating your hosts with respect and offering them 110% of your energy and commitment.

Ways to be a good PROGRAM "guest" include:

- ◆ Maintaining open and frequent communication with site staff about your off site appointments;
- ◆ Avoiding criticizing site staff or operating site policies, both while in the office and in public;
- ◆ Assisting you office with their othe programs as appropriate;

- ◆ Publicizing your operating site's services during training sessions and when talking with media;
- ◆ Keeping your workspace neat and organized;
- ◆ Maintaining a pleasant and positive attitude;
- ◆ Refusing to allow interpersonal conflicts with members or staff to interfere with your service or affect your professionalism;
- ◆ Informing your site supervisor about any problems you encounter in the field or in public; and

Fraternization Between Staff, Members and Service Recipients

In order to maintain a standard of professionalism and responsibility in leadership, it is necessary to establish guidelines for personal relationships between staff, members and service recipients.

Staff and member interactions or member and service recipient interactions within and outside normal PROGRAM hours take place only if there is an identifiable and recognizable PROGRAM related purpose behind the interaction.

In addition, the following standards **must** be followed:

- Members will not share in the use of alcohol with staff members or service recipients or in their presence at any time during the year.
- Members will not make a habit of seeing staff members or service recipients during weekends, vacations or non-PROGRAM hours. This means that while there is no prohibition against scheduling PROGRAM activities outside of normal program hours, or against occasional after hours contact between members, staff and/or service recipients, the following types of contact with members are prohibited:
 - ◆ Repeated or frequent contact with individual staff members after hours for recreational, professional or personal counseling purposes;
 - ◆ Visits by staff to members' homes when there is no parent or an adult family member present, or other corps members are not present;
 - ◆ Visits by members to staffs' homes or service recipients' homes or trips taken by staff and members together or members and service recipients together when only one corps member is present;
 - ◆ Any contact involving or suggesting the establishment of intimate and/or sexual relations between staff and members, between staff

and members of a member's family or between a member and a service recipient.

MEMBER RESTRICTIONS

1. Contact with minor age children

1. The Member is prohibited from having any contact with minor age children involved in the PROGRAM during non-service hours, unless special written permission is given by the Program Director prior to the contact.
2. During service hours, another adult must supervise any one-on-one interaction with minor age children by a member.

Violation of any of the above member restrictions will result in immediate termination for cause. Because of the difficulty in investigating improper behavior with a child, the lack of witnesses in the above situations, and the inherent risk to the child, any member who violates these policies will be terminated immediately for cause.

Members Living Allowance & Benefits

Living Allowance

Members are not considered employees. Moreover, members are not allowed to perform an employee's duties or otherwise displace employees. You will receive a living allowance. You are responsible for making up hours missed while schools are on breaks, so that the minimum of 1700, 900 or 450 hours required for the education award, is fulfilled.

Time Sheets: Time sheets must be signed by you and your site supervisor and submitted on the regular schedule that is printed on your monthly calendars. Your living allowance check will reflect the number of hours served during that pay period. The PROGRAM pay periods are twice a month, on the ____ and the _____. **(This is required by state law)** Submitting your time sheet on time is very important. Your check will be held until your completed timesheet is turned in. Continual failure to submit your time sheet on time will result in disciplinary action as outlined below.

Living Allowance Impact on Member Benefits

A. The Effect of a Living Allowance on a Member's Work Study and other Student Assistance

Work-study is a federal need-based program administered through post-secondary institutions to provide students with part-time employment while they attend school. By law, a member's living allowance does not affect work-study eligibility or eligibility for any other federal student aid. While financial aid officers have been asked not to take the living

allowance into account in determining state aid or private scholarships, programs cannot look to federal law to ensure this.

B. The Effect of a Living Allowance on a Member's AFDC (or TANF), Food Stamps, and other Need-Based Programs

A member's living allowance may affect his or her eligibility for need-based programs funded under the Social Security Act, such as AFDC or TANF, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Medicaid. A member's living allowance does not affect his or her eligibility for all other federal need-based programs such as Food Stamps, Section 8 housing, and public housing. (See pamphlet entitled "Special Legal Issues for AmeriCorps*USA" page 28)

Benefits

Health Insurance (insert information about your health care policy, if different from the Corporation's policy)

Corporation Health Care Policy

Members receive health care coverage under the AmeriCorps health care policy. Strategic Resources Company (SRC) provide information and brochures relative to this coverage. See attached brochure.

At a minimum you are covered under this policy for the following:

1. Physician services for illness/injury;
2. Hospital room and board;
3. Emergency room care;
4. X-ray and laboratory costs;
5. Prescription drugs;
6. Mental or nervous conditions (may be limited); and
7. Substance abuse (may be limited).

In addition, your policy includes the following minimum features:

1. An annual deductible of not more than \$250 per individual;
2. A co-pay requirement of not more than 20 percent or a comparable fixed fee;
3. An out-of-pocket expenditure of not more than \$1,000 per individual; and;
4. A lifetime maximum benefit of at least \$50,000 for each occurrence or cause.

Child Care

Eligible full-time AmeriCorps members may have a child care subsidy while they are participating in national service. In order to receive the subsidy, the member's family must be income eligible and the child(ren)'s caregiver must

be considered a legal provider in the state. AmeriCorps will pay up to 100 percent of the current market rate of childcare costs for eligible members who select qualified child care providers.

Reimbursement rates and eligibility will be based on locally established guidelines under the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), a federally funded program administered by each state.

Eligibility for Child Care Benefits

Full-time AmeriCorps members are eligible for child care benefits if they:

- ◆ Are parents or custodians of dependents under 13 years of age who reside with them;
- ◆ Need child care in order to participate; and
- ◆ Has a family income that does not exceed the state's income eligibility guidelines (ie: no more than 75 percent of the state's median income). This is the eligibility standard set by the CCDBG.

Members are not eligible to receive childcare from AmeriCorps while they are receiving other childcare subsidies.

If you have questions about your eligibility for Child Care please contact your Program Director as soon as possible.

Loan Repayments Postponed

AmeriCorps members are eligible to have the repayment of certain student loans postponed while they are earning an education award. This postponement – called forbearance- is not automatic.

Members must request it from their loan holders with the *National Service Forbearance Request Form*, which can be obtained from PROGRAM's Program Director.

Interest Payment at the End of the Term of Service

Toward the end of the service term, members should complete an *Interest Accrual Form* and send it to each of their loan holders. A copy of this form can be obtained from your Program Director. This form asks the loan holder to compute the total amount of interest that accrued between the beginning and ending dates of their service and gives the loan company permission to provide that information to the Trust.

This form may be returned to the member to check for accuracy and send it to the Trust. The interest payment will be made to the loan holder, not the member. The Trust will pay the total amount of interest that accrued during the term of service, even if the member had made interest payments during his or her service.

NOTE: Interest paid by the Trust is subject to income taxes. The Trust will send members an IRS form 1099 to be used when preparing income tax returns.

Service Related Injuries/Workers Compensation

Every member is responsible for the safety of him/herself at the Service Site. Be sure to observe all safety regulations and perform your position functions in a way that is not injurious to your health or safety, or that of others. If anything in your service environment is unsafe, let your Site Supervisor know immediately. **Inform [program director] if an unsafe situation is not rectified promptly (within one week).**

As an AmeriCorps member you are covered by Workers Compensation Insurance provided by PROGRAM **only** during the times you are performing your AmeriCorps service. **If you suffer any service-related injury, no matter how minor, please report it immediately to your Site Supervisor and Program Director.** If necessary, seek medical treatment and follow up care through the following procedure:

1. Notify your PROGRAM supervisor (Program Director, Coordinator, Training Supervisor) immediately (no exceptions).
2. Complete the Employees Claim for Workers' Compensation form that your PROGRAM supervisor will give you, and return immediately.
3. Assist your supervisor in completing the Supervisor's Report of injury by giving her more specific details regarding the incident.
4. If medical attention is required, PROGRAM staff will set up an appointment at an authorized (by PROGRAM) provider, unless you have previously indicated another health care provider of choice. This form must be on file in the members personnel file at PROGRAM. PROGRAM authorized providers are: **[Provide list here]**
5. If you are unable to get to an authorized provider because of your location, go to the nearest hospital facility.

In The Event Of A Life Threatening Emergency

1. Ignore the above information and go immediately to the nearest health care provider or emergency facility.
2. Complete the necessary paperwork and notify PROGRAM staff as soon as possible after a professional health care provider has seen you.
3. If continued medical treatment is required or if it is necessary for you to take a break from service, keep PROGRAM and your site supervisor informed regularly with updates in writing from your health care provider.

Designated Holidays

List days that members will not be expected to serve. No service hours will be counted for those days. **(PROGRAM may want to establish these days as**

“make up” days, as a way for members to make up hours without violating the 40-hour work week.)

Failure to Meet Standards/Disciplinary Action Discipline Procedures

The following list gives examples of conduct, which will result in disciplinary action. This list is illustrative only; other types of conduct injurious to security, personal safety, or member welfare also may be prohibited and result in disciplinary action up to and including release from service for cause.

- A. Unexcused absences or tardiness;
- B. Failure to follow directions;
- C. Failure to adequately perform assigned service duties;
- D. Theft or careless damage of PROGRAM or Service Site property;
- E. Driving for service-related purposes without having received authorization by Service Site or AmeriCorps supervisor;
- F. Abusive language;
- G. Engaging in fighting;
- H. Insubordination;
- I. Failure to notify a supervisor when unable to report for service activities;
- J. Inappropriate behavior or dress;
- K. Lying;
- L. Harassment of clients, fellow members or agency personnel;
- M. Involvement in prohibited activities (listed below);
- N. Breach of confidentiality;

For violating the above rules of conduct, or any other conduct outlined in this manual, which stated that the offense may result in disciplinary action the following procedures will apply:

- A. For the member’s first offense, an appropriate PROGRAM official will issue a verbal warning to the member;
- B. For the member’s second offense, an appropriate PROGRAM official will issue a written warning and reprimand to the member along with an action plan for the member
- C. For the member’s third offense, the member may be suspended for one day or more without compensation. The period of suspension does not count towards the Member’s required service hours.
- D. For the member’s fourth offense, PROGRAM will release the member for cause.

Although the above progressive discipline system will be used in most cases, discipline can start at any level from the first to the fourth level of discipline

depending on the severity of the offense. There is **NO** requirement that the Program follow a prescribed sequence in the imposition of a particular form of punishment.

Release from Term of Service

An AmeriCorps member may be released from service for the following two reasons:

- A. For compelling personal circumstances
- B. For cause

Release for compelling personal circumstances

An AmeriCorps member may be released from his/her term of service due to compelling personal circumstances if:

- 1. The member has a serious injury or illness that makes completing the term impossible;
- 2. There is a serious injury, illness or death of an immediate family member and the member is needed to care for that family member or take over the duties of the family member,
- 3. The member is required to serve a term in the Armed Services of the United States; or
- 4. Some other circumstances occur that make is impossible or very difficult for the member to complete the term of service.

PROGRAM is responsible for determining whether a member's personal circumstances are compelling.

Release for Cause:

The member will be released for cause including, but not limited to, the following reasons: (Examples)

- 1. The member has dropped out of PROGRAM without obtaining a release for compelling personal circumstances from the appropriate PROGRAM official;
- 2. During the term of service, the member has been convicted of the sale, possession, or distribution of a controlled substance;
- 3. The member has committed a fourth offense in accordance with the disciplinary procedure above;
- 4. Engaging in activities that may physically or emotionally damage other members of PROGRAM or members of the community.
- 5. Consuming alcoholic beverages during service hours or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages during service hours.
- 6. Possession, use or selling of any illegal drugs during your term of service or being under the influence of any illegal drugs during service hours.

7. Conviction of any felony during your term of service.
8. Suspected child abuse;
9. Falsifying any information supplied to PROGRAM, including, but not limited to, information supplied on application forms or service hour's time sheets.
10. Failure to notify PROGRAM of any criminal arrest or conviction that occurs during the term of service.
11. Failure to obtain written permission by the Program Director prior to having any contact with minor age children involved in the PROGRAM during non-service hours.
12. During service hours, any one-on-one interaction with minor age children by a member without the supervision of another adult.

Prohibited Activities

While serving as an AmeriCorps member in PROGRAM, or while in your AmeriCorps uniform, a member may not engage in the following activities in any manner that would associate the activities with PROGRAM.

1. Any effort to influence legislation;
2. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
3. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
4. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
5. Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
6. Participating in or endorsing events or activities which are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
7. Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities devoted primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
8. Voter registration drives by AmeriCorps members.
9. Members serving with for-profit businesses as part of the education and training component of the program; and
10. Providing assistance to a business organized for profit.

Individuals may exercise their rights as a private citizen and may participate in the above activities on their own initiative on non-PROGRAM time and using non-PROGRAM funds. The AmeriCorps logo must not be worn while doing so.

Evaluations

Your supervisor will provide you with a written review of your service performance after your first three months of service and at the completion of your term of service.

Grievance Procedure

All AmeriCorps Members must file complaints in accordance with the following procedures set forth below:

A. PRE-COMPLAINT PROCESS:

In general, all aggrieved parties, such as Members, applicants, or any other interested parties, should attempt to resolve any problems or disputes with the other party on a one to one basis. The issues should be clearly stated and understood by both parties. If this process does not resolve the matter, the aggrieved party may request that the program provide an alternative dispute process such as mediation or facilitation to resolve the dispute. The program and the aggrieved party will jointly select the mediator or facilitator.

Mediation is a candid, confidential, non-binding process. Mediation can be attempted either before or after a written grievance is filed. The Member must select this option within **45 days** of notifying their **[team leader or supervisor]** of their complaint.

If mediation is used and the matter is not resolved within **30 calendar days** from the date the mediation process began, the neutral party mediating the process will notify the aggrieved party of his/her right to file a formal complaint. The neutral party, however, may not participate in the formal complaint process. In addition, no discussions of the pre-complaint process can be referred to or introduced into evidence in the formal complaint process including the arbitration hearing.

B. FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS

1. Notification of Grievance

The Member must first notify his/her **[team leader or immediate supervisor or insert other appropriate person]** to discuss their complaint. The Member must explain the facts of the situation and how they propose to resolve the matter. The **[team leader or the supervisor]** shall inform the Program Director of the situation and the Member's proposed resolution.

[AT THIS POINT MEDIATION MAY BE ATTEMPTED]

2. Written Grievance:

By law the grievance must be filed **within a year** of the alleged improper order, action, or event, it is however preferred that law the grievance must be filed within a year of the alleged improper order, action, or event file a grievance filed **no later than 60 days** after the date of the alleged occurrence.

[Insert who will handle this process] has been designated to keep the grievance forms and coordinate the process by keeping the process on schedule. If a particular person, rather than or in addition to the programs, is named in the grievance, the **[designated person]** will notify the accused of the investigation and his or her rights under this policy. He or she will be given an opportunity to gather and present evidence and prepare a response to the grievance.

The aggrieved party can file a written grievance at any time - either before or after attempting mediation. The written complaint must contain a summary of the event and the aggrieved party's position.

The **[team leader or immediate supervisor]** must discuss the matter with the Member and any other appropriate parties and reply in writing to the Member's written complaint within **10 working days** after receiving it.

If the dispute is not mutually resolved or the **[team leader or immediate supervisor]** fails to reply within the 10 working days, the Member may appeal the matter to the **[Program Director, Program Coordinator or any other designated person]** with **5 working days** after receiving his/her supervisor's written decision.

The **[Program Director, etc.]** must meet with the aggrieved party within **5 working days** of receiving the appeal. At this meeting, the **[Program Director, etc.]** will discuss the grievance with the aggrieved party. Within **5 working days** of this meeting, the **[Program Director, etc.]** will render a decision on the grievance and the necessary actions.

If the aggrieved Member is unsatisfied with the decision within **5 working days** of receiving the decision or if the **[Program Director, etc.]** fails to issue a decision within the time limit, the Member may appeal the decision to **[Grievance Committee of the CLASP or other designee]** by notifying them in writing. The appeal should describe the grievance and the steps the Member has already taken to resolve the matter.

[AT THIS POINT THE INFORMAL HEARING IS HELD]

3. Informal Hearing

By law, an aggrieved party who files a timely grievance has a right to a hearing. Unless mediation was attempted, the hearing must be **held within 30 days and decided within 60 days** of the written grievance. [Program Name's] hearing official is [Grievance Committee of CLASP etc.]. The [hearing official] will determine what type of information will be necessary to decide the disputed issues during the hearing process and an investigation should be commenced immediately. A person who has not participated in any previous decisions concerning the issue in dispute must conduct the hearing.

A written opinion will be prepared by the [hearing official] explaining the ruling and issue the opinion to the aggrieved party, the Program Director and any other individual named in the grievance. [program can add others they would to be issued a copy]. All information and documentation from the hearing must be stored in a secure file for confidentiality purposes.

4. * Binding Arbitration

Unlike mediation, the arbitrator will decide the legitimacy of each position and resolve the matter.

If the hearing official's decision is adverse to the aggrieved party or **60 calendar days** after filing of a grievance no decision has been reached, the filing party may submit the grievance to binding arbitration before a qualified arbitrator. The disputing parties will jointly select the arbitrator. The arbitrator must be independent of the disputing parties.

If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator within **15 calendar days** after receiving a request from the aggrieved party, the Commission on Improving Life Through Service will appoint an arbitrator from a list of qualified arbitrators.

An arbitration proceeding must be held no later than **45 calendar days** after receiving a request for arbitration. If the arbitrator, however, is selected by the Commission, the proceeding must occur no later than **30 calendar days** after the arbitrator's appointment.

A decision must be made by the arbitrator no later than 30 calendar days after the date the arbitration proceeding begins.

The cost of the arbitration proceeding must be divided evenly between the parties to the arbitration. If, however, the Member prevails in the

binding arbitration proceeding, the program must pay the total cost of the proceeding and the prevailing parties' attorney fees.

Remedies for grievances include, but are not limited to, reinstatement of a Member wrongfully suspended or dismissed along with credit for service hours missed and back living allowances.

A lawsuit to enforce arbitration awards may be brought in any Federal district court having jurisdiction over the parties without regard to the amount in controversy or the party's citizenship.

*** Mandatory – must give members an opportunity to have an impartial hearing and/or binding arbitration per federal statute.**

Acknowledgment

I understand that this Handbook represents PROGRAM's current policies and procedures, it is not a contract between me and PROGRAM. Except for the policy that an AmeriCorps member may only be released "for cause", PROGRAM has the right to make changes, additions and deletions in these policies and procedures at any time without prior notice.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and read, or agree to read this handbook. I also agree to abide by the manual's policies and procedures, as well as any new or revised policies and procedures. I understand that I also acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of the AmeriCorps Provisions dated (August 1, 1997). I agree to abide by these Provisions during the time I serve as an AmeriCorps member.

Member's Signature

PROGRAM Representative

Date

Date

Discipline Procedures for Site Supervisors

All AmeriCorps members will follow the disciplinary procedures outlined in the AmeriCorps Member Handbook.

Please document everything, including chronic tardiness. Feel free to call PROGRAM DIRECTOR, _____, or _____, at any time with questions. Discipline can start from the first to the fourth level; for example, verbal warnings would not be appropriate if a Member came to the placement site intoxicated; most likely the Member would be terminated immediately for cause.

The supervisor should conduct the first level of discipline, a verbal warning to the member, and the AmeriCorps staff does not need to be notified. (For example, a member is 10 minutes late)

The second level of discipline, a written warning to the member along with an action plan for the member to improve the problem behavior, should be handled by the Supervisor, with documentation placed in the member's personnel file and sent to the Program Coordinator or Program Director (designate someone). (For example, a member is 10 minutes late 3 times in one week, or a member does not heed a verbal warning).

The third level of discipline, the member may be suspended for one day or more days without compensation. This discipline should be handled together by the Supervisor, Program Coordinator or Program Director. A meeting should be held with the member, Site Supervisor, Program Coordinator or Program Director. Written documentation should be prepared regarding the meeting and for the member's action plan. The member should sign this action plan. The member should receive a copy of this action plan and a copy should be kept in the member's file. (For example, a Member is AWOL or a member does not heed a written verbal warning).

The fourth level of discipline, the member will be released for cause. Primarily the Program Coordinator or Program Director should handle this level of discipline, with the assistance from the Supervisor. The Program Coordinator or Program Director should meet with the member and the Supervisor. Terminations must follow strict guidelines; it is the Site Supervisors responsibility to assure that proper documentation has been made to lead up to the member's termination. The Program Coordinator or Program Director will be responsible for assuring that all documentation is in order prior to termination. (For example, a member is intoxicated while at the placement site, a member is grossly insubordinate, and a member does not improve their behavior after being suspended).

